

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-11 OMB-01 CIEP-03 FRB-03 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAJ-01 NIC-01

COME-00 LAB-06 SIL-01 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /129 W

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R 251527Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5275

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION BERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 15181

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: SCHMIDT ON THE OFFENSIVE

REF: BONN 14819

SUMMARY: SCHMIDT'S SHARP ATTACKS IN THE PAST WEEK ON BOTH THE CDU/CSU AND ON THE LEFTISTS OF HIS OWN PARTY HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT STARTLING IN THEIR VEHEMENCE AND INTENSITY. HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH SCHMIDT WILL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO OVERSTEP HIMSELF, HIS STYLE GENERALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MESHES NICELY WITH THE PRESENT MOOD OF THE GERMAN

ELECTORATE. END SUMMARY.

1. SCHMIDT'S PERFORMANCE IN THE BUNDESTAG BUDGET DEBATE ON SEPTEMBER 20 AND AT THE HAMBURG SPD CONVENTION OVER THE WEEKEND HAVE REINFORCED HIS REPUTATION AS A HARD HITTING, NO-NONSENSE, AGGRESSIVE POLITICIAN. HIS REMARKS ON BOTH OCCASIONS HAVE BEEN WIDELY PUBLICIZED. SOME EYEBROWS HAVE BEEN RAISED, BUT THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO THE STANCE HE HAS TAKEN.

2. IN THE CONCLUDING HOURS OF THE BUNDESTAG'S BUDGET DEBATE ON SEPTEMBER 20, SCHMIDT TOOK TO THE ROSTRUM AND IMMEDIATELY LAUNCHED INTO A SHARP FRONTAL ATTACK ON THE OPPOSITION. ACCUSING THE CDU/CSU OF "SECRETLY HOPING FOR AN ECONOMIC CRISIS IN THE FRG," SCHMIDT THEN PROCEEDED TO RIDICULE CDU/CSU FLOOR LEADER CARSTENS' "FALSE LOGIC AND TOTAL IGNORANCE OF ECONOMIC MATTERS," FOR THE ABILITIES OF EX-CDU/CSU FLOOR LEADER RAINER BARZEL "WHO UNFORTUNATELY NO LONGER SPEAKS FOR THE OPPOSITION."

3. SCHMIDT KEPT UP THE POLEMICS OVER THE WEEKEND, BUT THIS TIME HE DIRECTED HIS ACID COMMENTS TOWARD THE "THEORISTS" (LEFT WING) WITHIN THE SPD. SPEAKING AT THE HAMBURG SPD CONVENTION ON SEPTEMBER 22, SCHMIDT LAMBASTED THE DELEGATES, PARTICULARLY THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS, FOR THEIR "PREOCCUPATION WITH THE CRISIS OF THEIR OWN BRAINS" INSTEAD OF WITH THE REAL CONCERNS OF THE ELECTORATE. NOTING SARCASTICALLY THAT MOST OF THE CONVENTION DELEGATES ARE HAMBURG CIVIL SERVANTS "WHO DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT," SCHMIDT WARNED THAT IT HAD BEEN THE SPD'S POOR PUBLIC IMAGE AS A PARTY THAT HAD LED TO THE HAMBURG SPD LOSSES LAST MARCH.

4. SCHMIDT'S READINESS TO TAKE ON THE LEFTIST RADICAL ELEMENTS IN THE SPD NOT ONLY REFLECTS HIS OWN PERSONAL PREDILECTIONS BUT ALSO MAKES A GOOD DEAL OF POLITICAL SENSE. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT JUSO ANTICS LOST THE SPD SOME VOTES (ALTHOUGH HOW MANY IS A SUBJECT OF DEBATE) IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS LAST SPRING AND SUMMER, AND RE-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CENT POLLS INDICATE THAT THE WEST GERMANS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE FRG. AN ALLENSBACH POLL PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 18 REPORTS THAT 48 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED ARE "WORRIED" ABOUT FUTURE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FRG, AND 45 PERCENT EXPECT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION TO WORSEN BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. FORTY-FIVE PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED (COMPARED TO 36 PERCENT IN 1972)

SAID THAT THEY THOUGHT "SOCIALIST TRENDS" IN THE FRG
WOULD BECOME STRONGER. OF THESE, 29 PERCENT (20 PERCENT
IN 1972) THOUGHT THAT THIS SOCIALIST TREND IS "DANGER-
OUS." THE POPULAR VERDICT AGAINST THE JUSOS, ACCORDING
TO ALLENSBACH, IS CLEAR--64 PERCENT CONSIDER JUSO
ACTIVITIES IN LOCAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS "DETRIMENTAL TO
THE SPD." ALSO NOTEWORTHY IS THAT THE NUMBER OF THOSE
WHO BELIEVE THAT TRADE UNIONS HAVE "TOO MUCH INFLUENCE
ON POLITICS" JUMPED FROM 26 PERCENT IN FEBRUARY 1973 TO
44 PERCENT IN SEPTEMBER 1974.

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5. COMMENT: SCHMIDT CLEARLY RELISHES CONFRONTATION AND APPARENTLY CANNOT RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO SHARPEN UP THE LINES OF BATTLE WITH THE CDU/CSU PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION. CARSTENS IS INDEED AN INVITING TARGET SINCE HE IS UNQUESTIONABLY A "WEAK SISTER" IN ECONOMIC DEBATE. SCHMIDT WILL HAVE TO KEEP HIS NATURAL TENDENCY TO POLARIZE ISSUES WITHIN BOUNDS, HOWEVER, IF HE IS NOT TO INVITE MORE TROUBLE FROM THE OPPOSITION THAN HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALREADY HAS IN THE GUILLAUME, STEINER AND WIENAND AFFAIRS. SCHMIDT'S PENCHANT FOR CRACKING JUSO HEADS ALSO CAN NOT GO TOO MUCH FURTHER BEFORE IT RESULTS IN STIRRING UP A REBELLION OF THE LEFT WING OF THE SPD. SOME SPD MODERATES BELIEVE THAT SCHMIDT HAS BEEN HITTING THE JUSOS TOO HARD RECENTLY AND THAT HE SHOULD LEAVE INTERNAL PARTY MATTERS TO BRANDT. WHERE "GOVERNMENT BUSINESS" LEAVES OFF AND "PARTY MATTERS" BEGIN IS, OF COURSE, NOT CLEAR--IN ANY CASE, BRANDT ANNOUNCED OVER THE WEEKEND THAT HE WILL BE A CANDIDATE FOR PARTY CHAIRMAN AT THE SPD CONVENTION IN MANNHEIM IN NOVEMBER 1975.

6. SCHMIDT, OF COURSE, IS VERY MUCH AWARE THAT TRADE UNION DEMANDS FOR WAGE INCREASES POSE ONE OF HIS MOST DIFFICULT HURDLES IN THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO SLOW DOWN RISING PRICES. LAST WEEK HE STRONGLY ATTACKED THE CIVIL SERVANTS UNION FOR ITS "IRRESPONSIBLE" DEMAND FOR A 10 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE IN THE COMING ROUND OF WAGE NEGOTIATIONS. HERE, TOO, HOWEVER, SCHMIDT WILL HAVE TO MASTER THE ART OF BEING TOUGH BUT AVOIDING DIRECT CONFRONTATION--SOMETHING WHICH BRANDT FAILED TO DO VIS-A-VIS THE TRANSPORT WORKERS LAST YEAR. HILLENBRAND

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